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The Montana Archivist

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Three More Regrant Projects Completed

City of Wolf Point project on page 4

articles by Anne L. Foster

Heritage Museum

The Heritage Museum in Libby, legally titled Museum, Inc., is housed in a twelve-sided, three-story log building built specifically for the collections. The museum began in 1972, in large part to preserve the collections of the late Roy Porter. The building was constructed by volunteers over the course of several years, opening to the public in 1978. The main floor contains the exhibits, storage areas, a theater, gift shop, and research room. The second floor houses an art gallery. The volunteer-staffed museum is open to the public from Memorial Day through Labor Day and for special events. The archival collections are housed on the main floor. A new research space was recently created in the former shop area. The research room is spacious, with room for as many as six to eight researchers, and is well lighted.

The museum houses a variety of archival collections, ranging from its own administrative archives to records of local businesses and organizations as well as some personal papers. Mining and lumber companies are well represented and include the records of the J. Neils Lumber Company, the Warland Lumber Company, and the Snowshoe Mine. There also are several collections from local clubs such as the Libby Women's Club, the Libby Garden Club, and the

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A volunteer at the Heritage Museum in Libby, begins the daunting task of organizing the museum's manuscripts.

Museum of Women's History

The Museum of Women's History in Billings was founded in May of 1995. First operating out of basement rooms on the campus of Montana State University—Billings, since 1997 the museum has resided in several rooms of a downtown Billings commercial building. The space includes an office, a storeroom, a research room-library, and a two-room exhibit space. The office and research area are located in the basement of the building, not adjacent to the exhibit space. The office houses the museum's current files.

The museum houses its own archives, as well as collected personal papers and organizational records. The collection includes two fairly large collections—the papers of the Shorey family and the records of the Montana Federation of Business and Professional Women—and numerous smaller collections. The collection is particularly strong in its materials related to women's clubs and includes records from chapters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Delta Kappa Gamma, the Colonial Dames, and Alpha Chi Omega. The personal papers of a number of women, including Alice Mary Hovland and Mamie Lacey, also comprise part of the manuscript collections.

The collection includes a number of special format materials: photographs, tapes, and videos. Currently most photographs are part of a larger archival collection. There also are a number of photographic reproductions used for exhibits. The cassette tapes are part of the personal papers of a women's studies instructor and consist primarily of recorded class and workshop sessions. Many of the tapes were recorded in the 1970s and early 1980s and their working condition is unknown. Plans are underway to transcribe the most vulnerable and valuable of these. The museum's own archives contains numerous videotapes of recorded television interviews done by the museum's founder, Dorothy McLaughlin, in conjunction with a local television station.

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HOW TO BASICS — Digital Imaging

by Molly Miller

Digital imaging is quickly becoming a significant part of the archives profession. Many repositories are exploring its uses for increased access to their collections or for preserving collections that are particularly at risk. Although digitizing can be a very useful tool in an archives, there are many facets of a digital imaging project and they all need to be carefully considered prior to the start of a project. Aspects to consider include: selection of materials, technology to be used, scanning the text or images, metadata to be collected, and legal issues.

Selection of the materials to be digitized constitutes one of the most important parts of the project. Material selection should be based on the mission of the institution, the nature of its existing collections, and the technology that is currently available. Setting goals and criteria for selecting materials is a good way to ensure that all of the selected materials meet your project standards. Selection goals should incorporate questions that address the purpose of the digitization projects, such as what you want to achieve with the project—whether it is providing access, improving legibility, or uniting scattered collections. Selection criteria should correspond with your goals and can include questions such as: can or should the material be digitized, is there sufficient content value, and is there a demand for the material.

Bitmap—*a two-dimensional matrix of pixels.*
Compression—*process of reducing the amount of data to be stored or transmitted: can be either lossless or lossy.*
Pixel—*picture elements or squares that are either black or white (binary), a shade of gray (grayscale), or color.*
Raster image—*image composed of a series of rows and columns of square pixels.*
Resolution—*the number of dots or pixels used to represent an image.*

The **technology** used in digitizing documents constitutes the second most important aspect of a project. The first step to mastering the technology is to learn the language—words such as bitmap, resolution, pixel, and raster. Basically, the technology of creating a digital image consists of converting an image into a series of picture elements that are represented by a series of binary digits (1s and 0s) that are arranged in a two-dimensional matrix or bitmap. When choosing the equipment to digitize—the scanner and accompanying software—be careful to ensure that it meets the technological needs of the materials selected for digitization. The scanner and software must be able to create digital images that accurately represent your collections.

Physically **scanning** the text and images can be a difficult and time-consuming task. Different standards must be used for text and images, as each document type has specific requirements. Text digitization can be done in several ways. It can be scanned as a page image such as a pdf file; as fully-searchable text; or as encoded text. One of the most widely used scanning options for text is OCR (optical character recognition). OCR creates searchable text from your document, but it must be used with care as it is not totally accurate in recognizing and translating letters—for example, confusing the numeral one and the letter el. Digitizing images can often be more difficult than scanning text, as images must be scanned and considered on an individual basis. When digitizing images, a digital master or archival scan as well as a "use" scan should be created in order to avoid the loss of information when images are compressed for ease of use. The archival scan should be of the highest quality that can be created and maintained.

Any digital imaging project must include **metadata** with its images. Metadata can be defined as the sum total one can say about a given information object. Metadata, which functions much like cataloging, is used for identifying specific characteristics of a digital image and for managing those images. Information collected in metadata can include a title, creator data, description, date, the type and format, and the source of the image. Metadata ensures the continuous identification and description of the digital image.

Finally, you must be careful to consider all relevant **legal issues**. In particular, the copyright of the materials being digitized is important to know. When considering copyright issues, keep in mind that copyright involves expression, not ideas; that registration is not required; and that possession or ownership of the physical item does not necessarily mean copyright ownership. A notice statement may be added to the project to inform users of copyright restrictions and/or the user's responsibility for copyright infringement.

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Libby *(cont.)*

Libby Fine Arts Group. The collections also include the papers of several prominent local individuals and families, including those of museum founder Roy Porter, and the tax and real estate records of Lincoln County. The collection also includes hundreds of photographs. These items have already been well catalogued and preserved by local high school students involved with the Montana Heritage Project under the direction of Jeff Gruber.

The first phase of the archives project was to create appropriate policies and procedures. Traveling Archivist Anne Foster and the Board of Directors drafted policies dealing with collection development, access, deaccessioning, photocopying, and on-site duplication to allow researchers to bring their own duplication equipment. The group also created an accessions committee to screen donations and to make deaccession recommendations. Procedures for acquisitions and accessioning also were developed and the group created forms for accessioning, researcher registration, deaccessions, photocopy orders, and an updated deed of gift.

The second phase of the project was to organize the donation, accessioning, and cataloging records. Donation forms, notes, cataloging worksheets, and even clippings were used to create a donation log. Accession numbers were assigned and donor files created. Because some donations were assigned numbers and others were not, a numbering system was developed to indicate which numbers were assigned by the archives project team, thus avoiding duplication. Procedures for items "found in the collection" were developed. Several volunteers agreed to become registrars and were trained in the accessioning and registration process.

During the last two weeks of the project, Foster and the museum volunteers began locating, arranging, and describing the collections. The museum's own records were processed first to assist in locating additional donation records. A record schedule for financial records was created to guide the selection of historically-valuable materials and govern the destruction of non-permanent records. A variety of collections—a small collection, business records, organizational records, and the institutional archives—were selected to provide examples for the museum's volunteers to follow in future processing. Written finding aids were drafted for each collection, also to serve as a model for the future. Each volunteer had a chance to independently process a collection and compose a finding aid. Students from Libby High School's Heritage Project worked in teams to process and write guides for several collections.

Billings *(cont.)*

Project Director Lana Cummins and museum volunteers had already spent several months identifying and inventorying the collections. A spreadsheet was created that listed location, description, and donor of the artifacts or archival materials. This preliminary work contributed greatly to locating and identifying archival materials within the larger collection. The museum has a well-designed donation form that must be signed by the donor and has maintained a file of these forms since soon after the museum's founding. Donated items, however, had not been marked or linked to the donation record. The small size of the current collection and the institutional memory of the museum's founder and volunteers allowed most items to be matched to donor records.

The first phase of the project was to create appropriate policies and procedures for the archives and research room. Traveling Archivist Anne Foster drafted policies dealing with collection development, access, photograph duplication, photocopying, on-site duplication to allow researchers to bring their own equipment, and publication. Also, an accession/deaccession committee was created to screen donations and to make deaccession recommendations. Finally, Foster devised forms for researcher registration, an accession log, deaccessions, photograph and photocopy orders, and permission to publish.

The second phase of the project was to assign accession numbers, match items with the accession records, and begin processing. Foster, Cummins, and museum volunteers began surveying and processing collections. A variety of collections were selected to provide examples for the group to follow in future processing. Written finding aids were developed for each collection and to serve as a model for the future. One copy of each guide was sent to the Montana Historical Society for entry into the statewide union catalog that is being created with the assistance of the Library of Congress' National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC). The volunteers completed arranging and describing the majority of the museum's current archival collections.

Foster also drafted a volunteer manual and a sample finding aid to help volunteers in continuing the project. The manual is intended to serve as a supplement to the *Preferred Practices for Historical Repositories* published by the Montana SHRAB. The volunteer manual provides specific procedural and stylistic decisions made by the museum—how to label a folder, for example. The sample finding aid serves as an example for future description as well as including notes to explain what information is required in a standard finding aid.

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City of Wolf Point Regrant Project

The City of Wolf Point is a local government entity founded in 1915. Located in Roosevelt county, the city is within the boundaries of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. The city offices are located in a dedicated building in the downtown area. Marlene Mahlum, the City Clerk/Treasurer, applied for a SHRAB grant to institute an imaging project. The City Clerk/Treasurer is responsible for the maintenance and care of the records of the city. Records selected for this project consist primarily of records created from the time of the city's formation in 1915 through the present day, including city council minutes, agendas, resolutions and ordinances, policies and procedures, payroll and related personnel records, and files documenting the city's fixed assets. The earliest records include bound, handwritten ledgers of minutes and cemetery interments.

When Anne Foster, the Traveling Archivist, arrived in December 2000, Mahlum had already identified, purchased, and installed the imaging software and hardware. She selected the LaserFiche document imaging software as the file management and conversion system. This program supports both scanning and importing of files, OCR and full-text indexing, and an "index card" database for controlled vocabulary searches. TIFF Group IV (lossless) and ASCII are used for image and text file formats. All index, text, and database files are stored in industry-standard, non-proprietary formats. Scan quality may be improved by adjustments in resolution, de-skewing, despeckling, and color mode. Search features include a variety of advanced search options including fuzzy logic, proximity, and some Boolean capabilities. The system is installed on a Gateway GP7-750 with an Intel Pentium III processor with 30 GB of memory. The operating system is Microsoft's Windows 2000 Professional. Scanning equipment is a Canon DR-3020 scanner.

The first week of the project Foster and Mahlum researched digital imaging standards, studied policies developed by other government agencies, and drafted guidelines for the City of Wolf Point's digital imaging project. The guidelines examine the city's needs and goals, analyze the project's audience, assess the documents selected for conversion, develop security and access policies, and create standards for scanning, intellectual control, storage, and preservation of the images.

At the same time, extensive testing of the system was conducted. A variety of record types, including photocopies, typed records, and laser-printed materials, were scanned, OCR converted, and indexed. Scanning applications such as deskewing, de-speckling, threshold levels, and resolution were each applied to the various document types until optimum character recognition was reached. The results were then incorporated into the guidelines.

The second week of the project Foster and Mahlum concentrated on scanning a significant portion of the records. Handwritten minutes that could not be OCR converted were rekeyed and both the image of the original and the text file added to the system. Records were scanned in batches, divided into individual documents, saved, converted, and indexed. Tests were conducted on the search capabilities, using both the simple and advanced functions. A CD was recorded to back-up the image files as well as test the process of writing and storing the media.

The digital images will supplement, not replace, the original records. The electronic copies will be more accessible, more easily distributed and duplicated, and can be fully indexed. The flexibility of the digital record will allow new uses for the information.

For a copy of the guidelines, write to Kathryn Otto, Montana Historical Society, P.O. Box 201201, Helena, MT 59620-1201 or e-mail <archives@state.mt.us>.